MEETING MINUTES

Huntersville Parks and Recreation Commission

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Members Present: Tige Chiesa, Kent Curran, Frank Freeman, Janelle Harris, Telisa Johnson, Kathy Lewis, Ash Munro.

Absent: Kendyl Brown, Taylor Hutto.

Guests: JD Weber (LNTA), Amy Brandon (LNTA), Vicki Weber, Meg Betzel.

Town Commissioner: LaToya Rivers.

I. CALL TO ORDER
This meeting was called to order by Kathy Lewis, Chair, at 6:30 p.m.

II. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM
Kathy confirmed that a quorum of commissioners was present at the meeting.

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES
Janelle moved to approve the minutes for the November meeting; Ash seconded the motion. All approved.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. Michael reported on the parks' visitors for FY23 at our four largest parks. There's been record park attendance last year. Bradford Park is the most used park. There is a counter at Rosedale Nature Park that counts only vehicles, and it showed that there were over 133,000 park visits. It does not count those that walk to the park from the neighborhood. We've recently installed a counter on the downtown greenway that shows between 70-80 people are walking that section of the greenway daily. Once North Mecklenburg Park splashpad opens, it will be interesting to see how those numbers go up.
b. Program Growth/Waitlist – There are about eight programs with a high number of people on the waitlists. There are only so many facilities available for programming. There will be additional indoor gym space once the new Lake Norman Charter Elementary School is completed. Tige asked what percentage is understaffing vs. space availability, of the six hundred fifty-four (654) persons on the waitlist. Michael replied that it is a combination of staffing, transportation,

and facilities. We are always working to find ways to reduce the number of people on our waitlists.

c. Parks & Recreation Master Plan – The Master Plan is updated about every seven (7) years. We try to meet the needs of the community by getting their feedback when preparing the Master Plan.
d. Survey Results – There is currently a survey on the website. It is interesting to compare the answers from the last survey in 2020 to those of this year 2024. We will compare all results once the survey closes in a few weeks.
e. Projects completed in 2023:
    - Huntersville Athletic Park Synthetic Turf.
    - Huntersville Athletic Park's lighting is now LED.
    - Waymer Park – multipurpose courts. Waymer Park walking trail.
    - Abernathy Park – We just found out that we've been spelling 'Abernethy' incorrectly all along. The $212,000.00 grant we received paid for half of the project at Abernethy Park. There's a new basketball court, playground, and shelter. There will be six fitness equipment pieces, as well as a walking trail. All work should be completed by February.
    - North Mecklenburg Park Splashpad. We are on schedule to open this summer.
    - Richard Barry Park restroom and parking lot. There will be ninety-eight (98) additional parking spaces and a new, much needed restroom building.
    - Lake Norman Charter Elementary School Gym. We have a partnership with them. This will be the fourth one, so all existing agreements will be extended.

    Future projects:
    - Waymer Splashpad.
    - Ramah Church Road Fire Station site. We need to show plans and get community input so we can apply for some grants for this park project. There's five (5) acres of land for the fire station and twenty (20) acres for the park.
    - Park Land Acquisition. We are looking at acquiring land in the downtown area and southwest area of town.
    - Bradford has future phases to add additional amenities.
    - Holbrook Park expansion will allow for more park amenities in downtown area.
    - Huntersville Recreation Center was built to be expanded. That will be one of the future projects. There's also plans to build an amphitheater at Huntersville Athletic Park.
    - Tennis Complex at Lake Norman Charter Elementary School – this agreement will be like the one we have with Community School of Davidson.

V. PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Janelle – There will be a Pottstown community meeting on January 20th at 1:00 p.m. to provide an update on the improvements at Waymer Park. She also inquired if there are inter-town/county tournaments for teams to play each other. Michael replied that most of the towns in this area have enough teams to play their own league and don't have to play outside of the town. Michael also pointed out that some sports cover all the towns e.g., Lake Norman Little League, Charlotte Independence and our volleyball league cover all the towns in the Lake Norman area.

Commissioner Rivers – Congratulated the returning and new board members. She looks forward to being on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and is available when we need her.

VI. PROGRAMMING REPORT

- Athletics
  - Registration is open for **Senior Softball and Adult (Coed and Men's) Softball League** and ends on February 11th. The season starts on the 23rd. There are only three spots left in our new Senior League, the Sandlot (age 70+).
  - Registration is also open for **Nothing but Net Youth Basketball** and **Youth Volleyball** (Both leagues begin on March 11th).
  - **NEW PICKLEBALL LEAGUE** – Thursdays (12:30-2:30pm) - COMING IN FEBRUARY.
  - **Mini Athletes** is in full swing on Tuesday & Thursday. **Volleyball** is full on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights.
  - **Disc Golf Tournament: Bradford Sundown Showdown** – February 10th. One round is played during the day and one at night.
- Recreation & Events

  **Upcoming Events**:

  Thursdays, (January – May) **Books by the Butterfly** (10:00am-11:00am) Rosedale Nature Park.

  January 21st – **Kids Creafting - Craft Journals & Gel Printing** (Ages 5-16) – (2:00pm-4:00pm) Recreation Center.

  January 26th – **Adult Game Night** – (6:30pm-9:00pm) Recreation Center.

  January 27th & 28th – **Teen Rock-Climbing & Lock-In** - Recreation Center.

  February 17th – **Black History Month Celebration** – (1:00pm-5:00pm) David B. Waymer Center.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS, REQUESTS OR PRESENTATIONS

a. Lake Norman Tennis Association – JD Weber is the president of LNTA. USTA helps on many levels with funding, such as grants for maintenance of our parks.

"Tennis is Alive & Growing". JD shared that racquet sports is growing. LNTA is a non-profit and is associated with the US Tennis Association. There are other programs they provide that are not USTA, such as ServeAces – mini-tennis brewery league and Try Tennis - low-cost introductory program for youth and adults. There are six hours of group instruction to get you from 'couch to court'. There are Meet Up Groups – social opportunity for recreational players, and Tennis Ladders – to challenge tennis players to meet other players. LNTA hosts the 18+ NC Adult State Championships every summer at Huntersville tennis courts and this qualifies them to play at bigger events. LNTA also provides a college scholarship award of twenty-five hundred dollars ($2,500.00) to rising seniors that are tennis players.

Racket Sports Growth – Post covid every sport is growing exponentially. Despite the introduction and growth of pickleball, tennis is still showing growth. Participation at LNTA is at its highest with over eight thousand (8,000) registrations.

JD shared the financial impacts of USTA/LNTA. There is also economic impact with the championship coming to this area every year. They contribute grants for facility improvements at Spartan Park, NMP and Holbrook Park. They also contribute to schools in the area.

Moving Forward, they would like to continue a partnership because seventy percent (70%) of their practices and matches are played on public courts. They will continue to contribute grants to assist in getting these courts built. More courts are needed in this area. They are also willing to assist with fundraising.

Tige asked how much does a single tennis court cost. JD replied that it depends. Bailey Park is a three-million-dollar project. North Mecklenburg Park was eight hundred thousand dollars ($800K) because there was little grading, a restroom, and parking being built. If the area is flat, it can cost about one hundred thousand dollars ($100K) per court. Janelle asked if the courts are interchangeable with pickleball? JD replied that USTA does not allow pickleball on tennis courts. Michael said that there is so much use on the courts, it's ideal to have them separate. Tennis needs a minimum of three, but most times five to six courts for team play. Michael mentioned that there is room at Bradford for additional courts and this can be added once we update the Master Plan. Ash asked if there is another entity like LNTA. JD replied that they (LNTA) run all the junior and adult tennis leagues. Amy Brandon added that they also have a 501C that works with under privileged youth and adults.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

a. Appoint Chair for 2024 - Tige moved a motion to reappoint Kathy as Chair for 2024. Kent seconded the motion. All approved.
b. Appoint Vice-Chair for 2024 – Janelle moved a motion to appoint Ash as the Vice Chair. Frank seconded the motion. All approved.

c. Approve 2024 Meeting Schedule – Kathy pointed out that June 19th is a holiday. LaToya mentioned that the Rotunda would not be available on the 12th due to another advisory board meeting that evening, so Janelle suggested that we move the meeting to the park. With this change, (moving the meeting from June 19th to June 12th), to the 2024 Meeting Schedule, Tige moved a motion to approve the 2024 Meeting Schedule. Telisa seconded the motion. All approved.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

a. Discuss changes to the Program Scholarship Policy –
Michael pointed out that we do not have a scholarship policy for seniors, only youth and children. We discussed and made some changes at the last meeting in November. Legal has reviewed the revised copy and will look over any additional changes made tonight before it goes to the Town Board. Tige asked how much money is available for scholarships. The Fry family donates five thousand dollars ($5,000.00) every year. Signage fees are also used for scholarships and park improvements. The balance is close to one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000.00). If someone has a financial need, we would like to help them. Janelle asked about the verbiage, if a child is on scholarship while the adult has a scholarship. Michael replied that scholarship money is available if there are other children in the household. Tige asked how much of the scholarship money do we typically use in a calendar year. Michael estimates that we use about ten thousand dollars ($10,000.00). We are confident that we will use more of these funds in the future. The plan is to take this application to the Town Board's second meeting in February.
Ash moved a motion to approve the Adult/Senior & Youth Activity Scholarship Application with the edits. Kent seconded the motion. All approved.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, February 21st at 6:30 p.m. at Town Center.